LABOUR MONTHLY

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CLASS POLITICS & THE ELECTION
The Editor

AFTER THE LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE
Ernie Roberts, Joan Maynard

ON CELEBRATING A REVOLUTION
Ivor Montagu

Housing Failure – Tom Vernon

India in Movement – Dilip Bose

Germany & Peace – Gordon Schaffer

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LABOUR MONTHLY

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Notes of the Month

CLASS POLITICS AND THE ELECTION

'Tis an awkward thing to play with Souls'
ROBERT BROWNING

October 20, 1969

In this month of the fifty-second anniversary of the first victorious socialist revolution Britain's political situation is dominated by the prospect of the general election expected next year. What should a socialist do in this coming election? In the present conditions of the political and electoral situation in Britain the answer to this question is not as easy and obvious as might be assumed. October has seen the conferences of the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, presenting the policies of the two contenders for the position of Government, following the gathering of the Liberal Party the preceding month. November sees the congress of the Communist Party. These are the four parties contesting the election on a national, that is all-country scale, since the Scottish and Welsh Nationalist Parties are confined to the regions of their nationalist appeal. But in fact only the Labour Party and the Conservative Party are contesting practically all the seats. The Liberal Party is contesting a lesser number of seats. The Communist Party has at the present stage the forces and finance to contest a restricted minority of seats (perhaps a prospective one in nine or ten), and is not yet a contender for the position of government. These are the initially limiting conditions within which the elector has to choose.

Problem of Socialism in the Election

In terms of policy and programme the Communist Party is the only one of the four parties presenting a programme of socialism, that is, for taking over the landed estates, banks and big privately owned monopolies into social ownership, alongside an immediate programme on the fight for wages and living standards against the monopolies corresponding to the demands of the organised trade union and labour movement, as expressed by Trades Union Congresses and Labour Party Conferences, but rejected by the Government of the Labour Party. But only a limited minority of electors, possibly as few as one in ten, will have the opportunity to vote for

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these policies, however much they may approve of them. The Labour Party is based on the trade unions, the mass organisations of the working class, for close on nine tenths of its membership, and on this basis has the traditional appeal to class solidarity and loyalty. But the policy of the Labour Party in office has conformed to the requirements of finance-capital, and the consequent offensive over wages and union rights, alongside heavy rising taxation and burdens on the cost of living, has brought it into conflict with its base in the trade unions. The Conservative Party is the organ of the big monopolists, financed by them, and striving to cover the mailed fist of the still more drastic anti-union offensive it plans ('stand up to the unions' in Heath's phrase at Brighton) and heavily increased indirect taxation through the value-added tax with smooth talk about progressive democratic aspirations for greater 'freedom' and 'opportunity'. The Liberal Party continues to try to straddle the class struggle.

Electoral Maze

The innocent neophyte of pure democracy might imagine that a general election provides the grand opportunity once in five years or so for the sovereign electorate to exercise its sovereignty by all its members freely expressing their preference for one or other of the rival policies offered by the four parties contesting the election, with full confidence that the volume of support in the country for each will receive corresponding representation in parliament. But this is not how it works out; for this would be proportional representation, which is rejected. The British electoral system is geared to channel the choice of the electorate into a choice between two parties, in effect between two governments, and even, in the more recent trend, between two Prime Ministers. These are the peculiar concrete conditions within which the voter, and especially the young newly enfranchised voter, who may wish to serve the cause of socialism and left-wing policies, has to determine his or her best course of action in the election.

Britain and the World

The election in Britain does not take place in a vacuum, as if it were only concerned with domestic policy, and as if that in turn were determined by the subjective wishes of the Government and electorate. Although the advance of national liberation and socialism has turned the majority of former colonies into independent states, Britain has continued to operate as a world imperialist power, both

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through the extent of its international financial holdings and transactions on a scale unequalled by West Germany, France or Japan, and only exceeded by the United States, and also overseas military role involving burdens not borne by West Germany, France or Japan, and only exceeded by the United States, but with the United States possessing far greater resources to meet those burdens. The crippling consequences of this continuing imperialist basis of the economy, even after the 'loss of the Empire', have dominated all questions of home economics and politics throughout the quarter of a century since the last world war, both under Labour and Conservative Governments—though this real situation is never mentioned in conventional election propaganda. The deficits on the balance of payments, even in the worst year 1964, have been entirely due, not to excessive home consumption, rising wages, inadequate production or exports, since even in 1964 all the normal current items other than government overseas expenditure and the export of capital showed a surplus, but solely to government overseas expenditure, mainly military, and the export of capital, which also in 1964 turned the surplus into a deficit. The present boasted surplus in the second quarter of 1969, and expanding further in the third quarter, has been the subject of exulting mutual congratulations of the Government and the City at the Lord Mayor's love-feast. But it has been won at the expense of throttling the home economy, spreading unemployment to the highest continuous levels since the war, and imposing such restrictions on the people that a Labour Chancellor can actually claim as a triumph the reduction of consumption by a half per cent. And it has been primarily due, as the Chancellor emphasised, to a very great increase of 'invisibles' income, that is, mainly overseas interest and profits and international financial commissions. He did not mention that it was also due to a very high increase of foreign, mainly American capital investment in Britain during that quarter (£206 million private capital from abroad, against an average of £120 million in 1967-68), resulting in the unusual phenomenon of a net inflow of long-term capital in place of the normal outflow—in other words, the advance of the process of the colonisation of Britain, mainly by American capital.

Building on Sand

Any Government which seeks to build the future of Britain or promises of progress for the people on this basis is building on a quicksand. This imperialist basis of Britain's present economy, which successive Labour and Conservative Governments have

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struggled to shore up during this quarter of a century, at the expense of limiting home development and imposing heavy burdens and successive austerity drives against the people, is highly precarious. For the whole capitalist world is in flux. The United States, France and other capitalist governments are also battling with problems of the balance of payments, and striving to increase exports and restrict imports. The present world trade boom may easily change by next year. The battle of the currencies is reflected in the soaring height of interest rates, which in turn restricts the development of production. Inflation, which used to be abhorred as a pernicious disease, is now complacently regarded as normal by many modern governments and high priests of finance, assuming in their calculations a 'reasonable' rate of annual inflation or increase of prices, thus ensuring a continuous expropriation of those with small savings or fixed incomes and painless reduction of wages except where there is sufficient organised strength to fight it. All these are expressions of the sickness of the present advanced stage of the general crisis of capitalism. This sickness affects most heavily Britain, the oldest country of capitalism, with the heaviest weight of accumulated dead capital charges and bondholders' claims, with the most parasitic imperialist economy dependent on overseas exploitation, and with the consequent most destructive offensives, in the desperate efforts for maintaining this system, to restrict home development and the standards of the people, so that today Britain is sinking in comparison with other advanced capitalist countries equally in the growth of output, the level of earnings or the level of the social services. The fight to change this situation, to end the death-grip of the finance-capitalist interests which have so far dominated every policy, whatever the Government in office, and to release the energies of the British people for the radical reconstruction of the country in the interests of the people is the key fight underlying all the issues of this election. Against all the obstacles of the existing electoral forms this fight needs to be pressed forward in every phase of the electoral campaign.

Underworld in Revolt

The present problems will not disappear, whatever the grand new technological programmes or ceaseless reconstruction of super-ministries in a bewildering succession of stage transformation scenes to administer state monopoly capitalism, but will recur and increase, and give rise to still heavier class conflicts and confrontations, as already indicated in a preliminary form in the recent open

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clashes between the Labour Government and the trade unions, so long as the main lines of policy continue to conform to the requirements of finance-capital and its basic imperialist interests. For this imperialist basis is crumbling. The fact that the battle for national liberation has won political state independence in the majority of former colonies does not mean the end of the struggle against colonialism. Rather, it is the beginning of the even more intense struggle to carry forward political liberation to economic liberation. The peoples still subjected to colonialist economy are moving to revolt against continued colonialist exploitation draining their country's resources for the profit of overseas monopolies, and subjecting them to extreme poverty.

Aid and 'Aid'

Awareness in imperialist official circles of this advancing revolt is revealed in the mass of studies and statistics on the increasing gulf between what are termed the 'developed' and 'developing' countries. Well-meant campaigns for increasing 'aid', governmental, private or philanthropic, are pressed forward to try to heal the breach. There is no doubt that serious aid for constructive development of the economy on an independent basis, without strings and without imposing heavy interest charges, as carried out by the socialist countries in relation to the newly independent countries, can serve a useful purpose. But there is no room for illusions that aid from imperialist countries, especially the type of 'aid' usually given and under the conditions usually imposed, to colonialist countries, while continuing the colonialist exploitation, can be a cure for that colonialist exploitation. The official figure of aid from Britain, running at 0.83 per cent of the gross national product in 1968 (as against 1.17 per cent in 1961) is made up by including with governmental grants or credits the normal processes of colonial investment by the overseas monopolies such as went on throughout the imperial era long before it was called 'aid'. The Labour Party document *The Fight Against World Poverty* has pointed out that, while the book-keeping cost of overseas aid to Britain's balance of payments is £70 million, £60 million comes back to Britain as repayment on capital and interest on previous aid loans; that 'for every £1 of multilateral aid by Britain there have been resulting export orders for 30s.'; and that on the basis of continuance of the terms and levels of 1965 'lending, net of interest and amortisation for developing countries as a whole could become negative by 1970.'

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Battle for Britain's Future

It is not surprising that the peoples struggling against colonialist exploitation will not regard aid as a substitute for that necessary fight, but are pressing forward in the fight to end their colonialist exploitation and win possession of their countries' resources. Zambia has nationalised the copper mines, even if with initially easy conditions for the companies reduced to a minority holding. Peru under the present military regime has advanced to nationalise the concession of Standard Oil. India under the Congress Government of Indira Gandhi has nationalised fourteen Indian banks with enthusiastic mass support, and the popular demand has called for the extension of similar measures to the foreign-owned banks. This is still only the opening stage of the new world advance of national liberation which will in the not distant future shatter the parasitic imperialist basis of Britain's economy. That is why the need for the radical reconstruction of Britain's economy on a non-imperialist basis is no question of abstract ideology or a dream for the future, but an urgent present need in order to tackle the domestic problems which have already been manifest and will be in the forefront in the coming election.

World in Movement

All over the world change is speeding forward. The decisive character of the world situation today is the advance of the forces of socialism, national liberation and peace, despite the parallel blows and offensives of reaction, as in Indonesia, Greece or Ghana, and the increasing sharpness of the war danger. The contrast between the continuous annually increasing economic advance of the socialist world, despite all problems, and the present anarchic crisis conditions of world capitalist economy is manifest, and strikes a blow at all theories of 'convergence'. Between 1950 and 1966 the share in world industrial output of the socialist countries associated in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance rose from 17.8 per cent to 31.0 per cent, while that of the Common Market countries fell from 12.5 to 11.8 per cent, and that of the United States from 43.6 to 28.4 per cent. No prophet of the miracles of modern capitalism can venture to predict the situation of world capitalist economy five years from now or even one year from now. Socialism can adopt five year plan after five year plan and carry each out in succession. What happened to George Brown's grandiose 592 pages *National Plan*? Lost in the dustbin along with the now deceased Department of Economic Affairs, which was originally set up to

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counter the power of the Treasury, the key administrative organ of finance-capital, and has now been vanquished in the unequal battle.

Capitalist Jungle

Despite all the computers and Ministries of Technology, modern capitalism, subject to the market forces of the giant monopolies, cannot in the final resort plan the economy of a country save for war; the myth of 'organised capitalism' is still as false today as it was in the nineteen-twenties and the nineteen-thirties. On this fifty second anniversary of the victory of socialism the Conservative *Sunday Times* (October 5) can triumphantly exult that during the first eight months of 1969 in the Soviet Union 'output grew by only 6.9 per cent'; in Britain the demand of the TUC for a 6 per cent increase in output (reaffirmed in the Jarrow resolution carried by the Labour Party Conference) has been rejected by the Government. The twentieth anniversary of the German Democratic Republic has shown how socialism, taking over the most difficult task in Europe, not only the ravaged heritage of Nazism, but the old homeland of German Junkerism and militarism and reaction, and honestly paying reparations instead of bilking them like West Germany, and without billion dollar American subsidies, has not only carried out Potsdam and denazification and destroyed the very roots of Junkerism, but has transformed this accursed inheritance into a thriving peaceful socialist republic, with seventh place among the world's industrial nations, and with the industrial production of 17 million East Germans in 10 months equalling the production of 67 million Germans in a whole year before the war. All Europe and the world should be grateful to the Government and people of the GDR for this heroic achievement in the cause of peace, instead of maintaining, with Britain in the forefront, fantastic obstacles against communications and trade and even continued refusal of recognition after twenty years.

Peoples in Movement

But new currents are also stirring in the developed capitalist countries. The unprecedented response from all sections, high and low, to Moratorium Day in the United States on October 15, when millions solemnly demonstrated their demand for the end of the American war in Vietnam, has been universally recognised, not only as a powerful blow for peace in Vietnam, but as a political portent for the whole future in the United States. Following the collapse of Johnson and the deepening discredit of Nixon, this demonstration of

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a type and on a scale without previous parallel in American history has been recognised by world opinion as a signal of the rising popular challenge within the American citadel of imperialist reaction against the domination of the policies of the Pentagon and the military-industrial complex and the bankrupt cold war strategies of military intervention in regions all over the world ('429 major and 2,972 minor overseas military bases, staffed by a million men, scattered over the globe', according to a confidential report to President Nixon quoted by the *New York Times* on April 9). In West Germany, the other main pillar of the cold war, the hitherto unbroken domination of the Christian Democrat party, the party of the tradition of Adenauer, Strauss, the Hallstein doctrine and revanchist ambitions, has been defeated by the electorate, and the Brandt-Scheel coalition has won on a programme of promises to take steps to diminish East-West tension and extend some forms of relations with the GDR and closer relations with the Soviet Union. France, following the visit of Foreign Minister Schumann to Moscow, has reached further agreements to strengthen co-operation with the Soviet Union in the economic, cultural and diplomatic fields. In Sweden the new Palme Government, following on the previous ministerial participation last year alongside the North Vietnam Ambassador to Moscow in a Stockholm march against the American war in Vietnam, which resulted in the withdrawal of the US Ambassador, has now announced plans for £16 million credits to North Vietnam, faced consequent threats from the US Export-Import Bank and cancellations of American business orders, as well as angry protests from Portugal over Swedish financial support to the guerrillas in Mozambique. Finland has been active, with the special visit of its Prime Minister to London to overcome Britain's resistance, in promoting the plan for a European Security Conference, and has offered Helsinki for a meeting place. Canada has announced withdrawal of half its forces from Nato.

Why Should Britain Remain in the Rearguard?

When change is thus sweeping forward over the world, when the obsolete shackles of Nato and the bankrupt cold war strategy are coming increasingly under question, and even leading capitalist countries like West Germany are beginning to feel out towards new orientations, why should Britain continue to fulfil the role of the most obstinate conservative power, the principal advocate for strengthening Nato, the most obvious satellite of US imperialism, the shameful defender of the universally condemned Vietnam war

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with concealed strategic assistance, the real initiator and fomentor of the war against Biafra, the strategic planner before the West German elections for a London-Bonn Axis with German militarism against the developing Franco-Soviet co-operation, and the most zealous advocate of 'strike first' nuclear strategy? All these deadly policies are repugnant to the feelings of the mass of the British people, just as was the original rearmament of German militarism when it was carried through by Bevin under Washington's orders and forced on an unwilling France. But it is precisely on all these the most important issues, which in fact determine the future of the people and the home conditions in Britain, that the electorate is given no opportunity of making a choice or expressing its wishes within the mechanism of the choice between the two governmental parties, because on all these major issues of the cold war, Nato, Vietnam, German rearmament, nuclear strategy or the Common Market they maintain a common platform and thus deny the electorate the right of choice. Indeed, it was characteristic that, when recent polls revealed the majority of public opinion opposed to Britain's entry into the Common Market (the scheme for intensifying the division of Europe by the organisation of a West European monopolist bloc of a minority of European states with the avowed political aim to confront the socialist states), after all three parties in parliament had officially given the aim support, the millionaire 'popular' press organs (*Mirror*, September 29) proceeded to scream in splash headlines, not that politicians should pay some attention to public opinion, but that it was the duty of the party leaders to 'lead' and not 'wallow in kerbside polls'. Down, dog, down and obey your masters!

Agenda For A Generation

The Labour policy document presented to the Brighton Conference under the title *Agenda For A Generation*, which was adopted by 3,562,000 to 2,272,000 votes (the minority vote reflecting the division on incomes policy), does indeed include—of course at the end—a section on foreign policy under the heading 'Labour and the World'. In this section occupying six columns or close on 3,000 words there is no mention of Nato. There is no mention of Vietnam. On nuclear weapons it is proudly claimed that 'Labour has abandoned Tory pretensions to nuclear "independence" '; but there is no reference to the Healey doctrine of first-strike nuclear strategy, proclaimed at his press conference in Munich on February 2, when he said that 'the German and British Governments are now working

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together on the development of a Nato doctrine for the initial use of nuclear weapons in a number of typical situations.' On the question of 'progress towards a détente' in East-West relations, 'real progress will depend on a more enlightened attitude on the part of the leaders of the Soviet Union.' Thus all the key issues on which the electorate should decide are effectively covered up from the decision of the electorate. This is the familiar method. The sovereign electorate had no say either in the war of 1914 or the war of 1939. The election before the war of 1914 was fought on the issue of the House of Lords; the secret commitments which prepared the war were not divulged even to the majority of the Cabinet until the moment of the outbreak of war. The election before the war of 1939 was fought with noisy proclamations by all the parties of adherence to the principle of collective security; the outcome was Munich and the path to war. This time it is essential that the great issues of international policy, which in fact determine the future for Britain, shall be brought into the open in the election, despite all the obstacles, through every possible means and channel, through the role of the active membership of the labour movement, despite official policy, through the choice of candidates prepared to fight on a left policy, and through the role of the Communist candidates.

Classes and Politics

Politics, Marxism teaches, is the expression of the struggle of classes in class society. Political parties express the interests of a particular class or section of a class. How does this shape up to conditions in Britain? On the face of it there might appear to be no more exact, almost classic demonstration of the theme. Britain is the one country where the working class is an absolute majority of the population. Class division has been carried further in Britain, the classic home of capitalism, than in any country. There is no peasantry; the majority of those working on the land are agricultural wage labourers, while the small stratum of farmers are usually tenant farmers. Small businesses have been heavily submerged by big business or fallen under its domination. The enlarging strata of employee, office, technical and professional workers draw closer to the conditions of the industrial proletariat, have adopted corresponding forms of organisation, and move towards increasing association in practice. The wage and salaried workers constitute the overwhelming majority of the population. At the other pole, concentration of capital is extreme. Does the political structure of parties

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correspond to this class alignment? Superficially, it might appear to correspond precisely. The Conservative Party is openly financed by the big monopolies. The Labour Party is mainly financed by the trade unions, and draws 88 per cent of its membership from affiliated trade unionists. Yet in real life the political practice of the two main parties by no means corresponds to this class confrontation. Both parties repudiate the class struggle; there is wide complaint of the similarity of policy of the two parties; they occupy a common platform on many main issues; there is wide complaint among active members of the Labour Party that the Labour Government has adopted Conservative policies, approved by the bankers and involving conflict with the organised workers. Thus there is here a contradiction at the heart of the present political situation. The Labour Party is based organisationally upon the workers, but acts in practice as a party of capitalism, at best as a liberal reform party of capitalism. This is the contradiction which lies at the heart of the present problems of the labour movement and of the election.

A Two-Class Party

Marx long ago in the nineteenth century analysed the causes and characteristics of the special phenomenon of 'bourgeois labour' politics and what Engels called the 'bourgeois labour party' in Britain, at a time when the organised workers still acted as a wing of the Liberal Party. Lenin carried forward this analysis in the era of imperialism, following the formation of the Labour Party as a party based on the trade unions and separate from the Liberal and Conservative Parties. Stalin carried forward this analysis of the Labour Party in 1927:

> Let us take the workers' party in England (the Labour Party). In England there is a separate party of the workers which bases itself upon the trade union organisations of the workers and employees. No one would hesitate to describe this party as a workers' party, and it is so described, not only in England, but in all other Marxist literature. Can we say, though, that this party is actually a workers' party, a class party of the workers setting itself against the bourgeoisie? Can we say that *in fact* it is a party of one class, the working class, and not a party, let us say, of two classes? No, we cannot say this.
>
> In fact the Labour Party is a party of a bloc of the workers and the petty bourgeoisie of the towns. In fact this party is a party of a bloc of two classes, and if we have to say which influence is the stronger in this party, the influence of the workers directed against the bourgeoisie, or the influence of the petty bourgeoisie, then we must say that the influence of the petty bourgeoisie is predominant in this party. It is this fact, really, which explains why the British Labour Party is in fact an extension of the bourgeois Liberal

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> Party. Yet in spite of this it is called in Marxist literature a workers' party. What is the explanation of this 'contradiction'? It is that when we define the Labour Party as a *workers'* party, we have in mind, not the actual situation in this party *at present*, but its type of structure as a workers' party, by force of which in certain conditions it can be transformed in the future into a genuine class party of the workers, setting itself against the bourgeois world (J. V. Stalin, interview with students of the Sun Yat Sen University, May 13, 1927).

It is true that the current fashion is to throw the baby out with the bathwater, and because there was a previous trend to treat every theoretical analysis by Stalin as infallible, therefore to treat every such analysis now as suspect. But both trends have always been and remain foolish, and there is still plenty of value to be gained from his theoretical work, provided it is taken in a critical spirit. And there is no doubt that this analysis of the Labour Party has still a close bearing on present problems.

Basic Class Contradiction

This class contradiction at the heart of the Labour Party has been brought into sharper focus than ever before by the confrontation of the Labour Government and the trade unions over incomes policy, and by the debates and votes of the Brighton Conference. Outside press commentators have observed with disdain what the *Financial Times* (October 3) called the 'language of ambiguity' of the Conference involving 'a special vocabulary which, if not actually meaningless, is at least capable of an almost infinite variety of meanings.' With such examples as the resolution on the Common Market, moved by the Transport Workers to express hostility in the form of blocking conditions and sweetly accepted by the Executive as implying the aim of entry and unanimously adopted, the same commentator observed the method by which the Conference

> accepted resolutions blatantly intended to deflect the course of government policy, blandly cushioning the impact with a comfortable gloss from the platform.

Similarly *The Times* (October 1) noted the technique to

> endorse resolutions which mean one thing to their sponsors and are then made to mean something else by the man or woman on the platform.

But how else bridge the contradiction between the opposing class viewpoints and maintain the unity of the organisation? Even so, despite this technique, the class division forced its way through in a number of significant votes. The Jarrow resolution for the adoption of the TUC economic policy, including the cutting of arms expenditure and capital exports, lower interest rates, a flexible exchange

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rate and a six per cent growth rate, could not by any ingenuity be 'interpreted' to mean the Jenkins platform, and thus had to be voted on and was endorsed by 3,569,000 to 2,416,000 votes. Similarly the main document *Agenda for a Generation*, owing to the refusal to allow a reference back of the few lines on incomes policy, was only carried against an opposition vote of over two and a quarter million. Not without discernment the Conservative commentator Peregrine Worsthorne (*Sunday Telegraph*, October 5) defined from his viewpoint the aim of the left trade unionists, voiced by Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon, to make the Labour Party 'an instrument of the organised working class' and the aim of Harold Wilson to make it 'the party of enlightened capitalism'. This class issue at the heart of the Labour Party will become more insistent with every development of the economic and political situation.

Problems of the Left

This class contradiction in the present stage of development of the Labour Party underlies the present problems of the left. How to carry forward the indispensable class fight for the politics of the working class and socialism against the present dominant right-wing policies, which in fact represent the politics of capitalism, and at the same time maintain the united class solidarity represented by the affiliation of the trade unions to the Labour Party? This is the problem which becomes especially acute at the moment of an election, and to which all socialists and militant trade unionists in the Labour Party (including the communists, who are also trade unionists, paying their political levy) are devoting their efforts to solve. Victor Feather put it like this at the eve of conference meeting at Brighton:

> A Labour Government cannot be a political satellite of the unions, nor would the unions seek such a situation. But in any democratic society trade unions can never allow themselves to be subservient to any government, even a government of their own choice.

This division of functions, however, between a Labour Government and the trade unions cannot be a final solution. In the end one or the other class policy must prevail. Hugh Scanlon, moving on behalf of the Engineers the resolution at Brighton for unity in support of the Labour Government and the renewal of its mandate at the election, said:

> Despite the disagreements, despite the reservations, the Labour Government is the only one which can and must receive a further mandate from the electorate of this country. The engineering union does not see eye to eye with

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the Government on certain issues. But the Labour Party is the only effective working-class party in Britain.

But even here in this moment of declaration of unity the class contradiction reappeared. For the resolution presented by the Engineers called for support for the Labour Government 'subject to the decisions of the affiliated trade unions'. This phrase was deleted by a vote on a show of hands in the conference. Thereupon it was reported in the press that 'Mr. Scanlon and some of his delegation, as well as some of the transport workers' delegation, abstained when the amended resolution was approved.'

A Twofold Fight—Class and Party

What is the solution? Of course there would be no problem if the Labour Party were already based on the politics of the working class and socialism. But it is at the present stage that the problem arises in the special conditions of the organisation of the labour movement in Britain. The progressive trade unions, powerfully reinforced today by the advance of the movement at all levels, and in association with individual left supporters and groups within the Labour Party, have conducted and are conducting an outstanding fight for working-class politics and for changes in the policy of the Labour Government. But trade unions, organised on the basis of economic groupings of the working class in a given industry or range, to represent their interests, and not on the basis of a political theory, cannot be a substitute for the indispensable necessity of a political party of the class. Nor can a kind of compromise offer a satisfactory solution, by which the role of the political party is left in the hands of the upholders of capitalism, while the trade unions exercise the role of a protesting body or pressure lobby from outside the seats of political power. The two elements are essential for success: the political party of the working class to voice and fight for the politics of the class on the basis of working class theory, that is, Marxist theory; and the broadest unity of the class as a whole in the political field, represented in British conditions by the unity of the unions for common political action. It was these considerations which led the Marxist socialists in Britain, with preceding experience both inside and outside the Labour Party, to unite to found the Communist Party in order to seek to fulfil this role within the common movement. Lenin at that time fought against the sectarian trends which sought to counterpose the Communist Party to the Labour Party as a battle between two parties, instead of recognising the field of work, with the proposal

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in the conditions of that time for affiliation alongside independence of expression. But Lenin at the same time fought against the alternative trends which sought to present the Labour Party as already 'the party of the working class' because of its basis in the working class, when its policies and leadership were still capitalist in character. These principles of the parallel inter-related role of the party and the class continue more important than ever in the conditions of the more advanced stage of development today.

Electoral Tactics

These principles also point the line of approach to find the best practicable way to serve the interests of working-class, socialist and left-wing politics in the difficult and often obstructing conditions of the election. It is evident that the fight for socialist policies, for the changes in policy which are widely recognised to be necessary, and for the policies which have been demanded by Labour Party Conference and Trades Union Congresses, but which have been so far rejected by the Labour Government, as well as by the Tories, will have to be conducted on a series of fronts within the conditions of the election. The fight of the Communist candidates will be of key importance precisely because they will be able to voice these policies clearly, fully and without restriction. At the same time in the choice of Labour candidates in the majority of constituencies where there will be no Communist candidates standing, every effort will need to be made to ensure candidates who will be prepared to fight on a left-wing programme, or to press such policies on candidates already adopted. Where a notorious right-wing Labour representative may be the only nominee against the Tory (or Liberal), the angry view is sometimes expressed from left circles that it would be repugnant and impossible to vote for such a type. This view tends to see the election in terms of the individual candidate, and not as primarily a national measure of political affiliations. While the maximum possible Communist vote would be of the greatest political significance, and the fullest support for left Labour candidates would be of parallel significance, the national measure of Labour versus Tory votes, irrespective of candidates, is a national measure of elementary class affiliation and of movement to right or left; the election fight needs to be at the same time a fight for the defeat of Toryism and for the advance of left policies. The alternative view is also put that the presentation of Communist candidates, without a Communist-Labour electoral agreement, contradicts the aim of the defeat of Toryism; but the contradiction here lies in the

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electoral system and the refusal of an electoral agreement; and experience has shown that the presentation of a vigorous left fight can do more to raise the whole level of the fight against Toryism on a national scale than the suppression of the left fight. All these tactical questions, especially in the electoral sphere, are inevitably controversial, and can only be settled in the course of further discussion and experience by the responsible bodies of the working-class movement. Any suggestions here put forward can be no more than suggestions in such a discussion.

Communist Congress

It is for its contribution to the consideration of these common problems of the working-class, socialist and left movement that the Communist Party Congress due to be held in mid-November will take on its distinctive importance in the present situation. At the beginning of this year in a survey of the outlook for 1969 the General Secretary of the Communist Party, John Gollan, set out the perspective and the aim in these terms:

> We see as the major task for 1969 the further development of the militant, democratic anti-monopoly movement in all its various forms, to win victories as a result of mass action and vital changes in Government policy . . .
>
> The major slogan should be: *Halt the advance to the right—turn Britain to the left.*
>
> The decisive arena for 1969 is the mass struggle. The key to the mass struggle is unity. The platform is the immediate alternative anti-monopoly programme on which a large measure of agreement exists in the movement. A victory for this policy would open up the way to socialism.

We can be confident that the coming Communist Congress, representing key sections of the militant working class and active left in all parts of the country, will further develop the path towards the fulfilment of these aims.

R.P.D.

EMRYS HUGHES, M.P.

We pay tribute to the memory of a great working-class and socialist fighter, a memorable figure in public life, a brilliant satirist and a valued contributor to *Labour Monthly*, Emrys Hughes. His contributions included: *Can Armaments be Reduced?* (1948) and *The Revolt in Parliament* (1968).

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LABOUR PARTY AND THE UNIONS

Ernie Roberts*

THE argument between the trade unions and the leaders of the Government over the prices and incomes policy was continued at the 1969 Annual Conference of the Labour Party. The controversy arose out of the section headed 'Productivity, Prices and Incomes' in the National Executive statement, *Agenda for a Generation.*

Brothers H. Scanlon (Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers) and Jack Jones (General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union) objected forcibly on behalf of their delegations to the continuation of government interference in wage negotiations. This policy of government control of wages had already been rejected by the Labour Party Annual Conference and the 1969 Trades Union Congress, and to find it put into a policy document, which was to be the Labour Government 'Policy for a Generation' was sharply attacked by many trade union delegates.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Wilson, during the Conference, argued that Barbara Castle's reference to this issue did not mean that the document, *Agenda for a Generation*, was dealing with government control of wages. However, in spite of a number of statements from National Executive Committee members trying to allay the fears expressed by the trade union delegations, the two biggest unions, together with a number of smaller unions, combined to vote against the document, but the document was accepted by a majority of Conference because they felt the NEC had no intentions of advocating government control of wages.

On equal pay and Barbara Castle's statement that the Government would bring in legislation to make it illegal to discriminate against women in rates of pay by the end of 1975, this did not satisfy many trade union delegates. Britain's 8,600,000 women workers have been waiting since 1888, the date when the Trades Union Congress first demanded equal pay. Further, the suggestion that men must be ready to see their own pay advances slowed down or held back, in order to give women time to catch up, is an excuse for not paying women equal pay immediately.

*Ernie Roberts, as many of our readers know, is Assistant General Secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers.

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We insist that the Government as one of the biggest employers of women workers should pay all women in their employ on the principle of equal pay for equal work—now—today! Industry can afford to pay women on the basis of equality and they and their trade unions will not wait until 1975 for economic justice.

Brother Scanlon made it clear in his brilliant speech to Conference that, whilst we trade unionists will do everything possible to get a Labour majority at the next general election, we shall go on fighting for the interests of our members even if this means coming into conflict with a Labour Government, in order to defend the living standards of all trade unionists.

CONFERENCE IMPRESSIONS

Joan Maynard*

THERE was a better spirit abroad. The platform wallowed in the better trade figures; the delegates were only too glad to welcome any good news. This is not surprising in view of the beating we have taken over recent months, with not a ray of sunshine in sight.

However, not very far beneath the surface the row between the trade unions and the Party, as legislation to curb the power of the unions rumbled ominously. Barbara Castle triggered off the row by her references to the Government's intentions on this matter. This kind of action indicates to me two things: (1) the power of international finance, still, as always, determined to have its pound of flesh from the usual source—the working people, putting pressure on the Government to maintain its attack on the living standards of the working people of this country; (2) a complete lack of understanding on the part of people like Barbara Castle who have no real understanding of the continuous fight which goes on every day in industry between the boss and the workers at shop-floor level.

It is to the credit of the Labour movement that it has thrown up men like Hugh Scanlon and Jack Jones; it does my heart good to hear and see them putting the workers before everything else, including the Party; it is high time we had this kind of loyalty to working people, who have themselves received so many lectures and strictures on loyalty from the politicians.

* Joan Maynard, as many of our readers know, is Vice President of the National Union of Agricultural Workers.

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It also did my heart good to hear Jack Jones speaking up for the low-paid worker, so long neglected because of weak organisation. The political wing owes the trade union movement a great debt for stopping the movement splitting itself asunder on the Government's so-called prices and incomes policy. I must say George Brown astounded me when he said, just before the Party Conference: 'We don't want to go back to a free for all.' We can't go back to it; we have never left the free for all; wage earners have had their hands tied by the prices and incomes policy; profits, prices and dividends have enjoyed the free for all, all the time.

We should certainly be in a bad way at the Party Conference without the socialist point of view being put by certain trade unions, for I feel that the left in the constituency section is still conspicuous by its absence. Of course it is these people, the active workers, who were the first casualties of government policy. Eventually of course the demise spread to the ordinary fee-paying members, hence the dramatic fall in national individual membership.

I have been a Party agent for 16 years and I have never known morale at such a low ebb as in the past three or four years. So let us hope that the better spirit abroad at Conference will soon reach back to the active workers and so begin the task of revitalising the movement.

Congratulations to Jarrow and Buckingham Constituency Labour Parties for successfully moving and seconding the resolution on economic policy. This resolution laid down positive guidelines for a definite change of government policy and strategy on the economic front. It appealed to the Government to take account of TUC policy put forward in their *Economic Review 1969*, to restrict outflow of private capital investment in developed sterling countries, and to make significant cuts in defence expenditure. The fact that this resolution was carried by 1,506,000 votes indicates the desire of the Party to move away from the present restrictive policy of the Government to a policy of expansion.

Roy Jenkins spoke to Conference in his usual firm decisive manner; I seldom agree with his economic policy but I consider him a very able person. The fact remains however that he has closed the trade gap by traditional Tory methods of restriction, which has produced a level of unemployment which is unacceptable to the movement. What a rotten society this is that it can only begin to solve its economic problems by creating unemployment.

I did not think the level of debate particularly high this year at Conference but I thought the best debate was on the crucial issue

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of the Common Market; I only wish that it had resulted in a clearer decision. Personally I have always been against entry for both political and economic reasons, and though Conference did not make a clear-cut decision against entry I feel that to some extent the debate reflected the growing opposition to entry which there is in the country. Nevertheless too little is always said about the political implications of joining; most of the discussion was on the economic problems. Politically we should be going into what is largely a reactionary *half* of Europe so far as governments are concerned. It is very important to note we are only going into *half* of Europe. In fact the whole purpose of the Market is to widen the division there already is in Europe; it is a splitter not a uniting influence. It will bring West Germany nearer, if not participating in, nuclear re-arming; these are extremely serious implications apart from the economic difficulties of higher food prices and a return to the trade gap. Agriculture would I am sure suffer greatly; it therefore follows that the farm worker would suffer; his hope of prosperity is bound up in the prosperity of the agricultural industry. High food prices would hit him very badly as it would all low-paid workers. Can we get the safeguards we want? I doubt it very much.

Summing up on the Conference, we still have to win the Party and more so the Government to a socialist policy. This is the issue on which we must particularly fight, for unless we fight on a socialist programme and not just a reformist programme then in the end we shall lose control. The electorate must be given a real choice. We must be firm and clear in our policy statements, not as in *Agenda for a Generation* edge them round with all kinds of qualifications and so make them largely meaningless.

We must have faith in the working people, for only they can build a socialist Britain. We must be honest and outspoken with them, not slick and mealy mouthed. I have always firmly believed that given a socialist lead consistently over the years the people would follow. In particular the young people are searching for a different and better society. They are, as youth has always been, idealistic; they will not follow policies of expediency and reform—they seek more drastic change. Who can blame them for revolting against this society which casts the weakest to the wall, encourages people in the rat race for material things and misses the things that really matter in society. Today perhaps more than ever people look for a lead. The labour movement must give this lead and so make sure that we return a Labour Government. 'They conquer who believe they can.'

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The Fifty-second Anniversary

ON CELEBRATING A REVOLUTION

Ivor Montagu

IN Moscow a few weeks ago for a Biological Conference, I visited the Taganka Theatre to see 'Ten Days that Shook the World', a sort of opera-bouffe compilation on the theme of the John Reed book.

From the formalist-purist point of view the show was old hat. Skilfully, superbly done, but where we came in during the Experimental 'Twenties. Farce, drama, masks, symbolism, song, dance, writhings, colour, darkness, shadow-show, tricks with lighting, tricks with Lenin's voice—impersonated by Shchukin the actor who so often plays him on screen and stage—in fact every weapon in the book. Only the outlook was up to date. The wit sharp and 'with it'. The comedy evoked guffaws, the repartee applause, Lenin's pointed observations—culled from speeches and writings—sometimes an ovation. And *all the audience was young*.

The theatre was packed. Some parents brought by their children. But mostly independent young people, of all shapes and costumes, save that skirts tended to be slightly less mini, male coiffures less luxuriant and various than with ones here at home. Plenty of young lovers. No old fogies but I.

Kremlinologists would have one believe that the latest Soviet generation is cynical and devoid of idealism. It has heard too much of revolution and become quite indifferent to it. Of course in a diverse land of 200-million-plus pullutating people, it is not hard, if you search to that end, to descry minority tendencies marked enough plausibly to justify almost any preconception. But I am doubtful.

Alexander Werth, in his very last book,* tells of an encounter with an eighteen-year-old *Pravda* reporter sent to interview him. The young man not only—of course—could not remember the Revolution and could not remember the war, he could not even remember Stalin, for when the old generalissimo had died the young reporter had been only two years old. It is such as these who are beginning to come on the stage and play a grown-up part. How can

* *Russia: Hopes and Fears*, Alexander Werth. Penguin Books, 392 pp., 8s.

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we straddle the gulf between us and those for whom our most meaningful experiences are only events in history books or their parents thrice-repeated anecdotes? When some of us were young, in 1910 or 1920, how far away from us was 1880, 1890 or even 1900! Naturally, in this case, Werth sought as rapidly as possible to interchange the roles of interviewer and interviewee.

What is the right way, then, to celebrate November 7, 1917, so that it retains its meaning as mankind's Great Divide? Every celebration too often repeated may lose its savour. We have only to think, for example, how religious significance has filtered out, and the great flood of self-indulgence and commercial profit come pouring in, to turn Christmas back into a pagan Yule. Of course, that is over a period of near 2,000 years and 1917-1969 is only 52. Nevertheless I fancy there is a risk that day-to-day preoccupations of struggle may obscure the giant nature of what has been already won. The trees must never hide the wood.

We usually see the October Revolution as marking 'the great breakthrough': the beginning of a transformation of the world from capitalism—which in these days can bring man a fruit only of conflict, of fascism at home and imperialism abroad—to a society at once more moral and more rational, capable of producing a more general prosperity, happiness and peace. This is right. But the path there is beset with struggle, error and frustration, unexpected happenings, the need to relearn and change. In the heat of this effort we sometimes fail to notice the degree to which November 7 has changed already the *whole* world, not just the areas moving toward socialism but the rest too, has made this an entirely different place.

Before 1917 it was common to accept as God-given that millions should starve in the midst of planty, that women should have no rights and workers put up with poverty and unemployment, that wars and famine were inevitable, that the good life and education should be reserved for the rich, that doctoring and good medicine was a right only of those that could 'afford' it, and that the 'advanced' nations had a right to rule 'lesser breeds without the law' and take a profit.

I do not mean that contrary ideas were not ripening before October, or that these things have yet been eliminated from the human condition and from human history since October. What I mean is that it was the successes of the Revolution that have put those who still hold such ideas on the defensive everywhere. It is *no longer normal to defend them as normal.* Who now dares sing

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about the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate; or claim that if it were not for the rich there would be no work for the poor; that it is no good giving the poor clean homes for they would only keep coals in the bath; or prate about the 'White Man's Burden'? Yet all these things were commonplace when I was young.

It was October that showed riches and privilege of birth unnecessary, gave the land to the people, emancipated women, abolished unemployment, provided a free health service, destroyed the unequal status of nations and races in its society, opened science, culture and opportunity to everyone, called for peace without annexations.

Would Harold and Barbara have been constrained to even lip-service toward equal pay for women if October had not realised it already as long as 50 years ago? Would Britain have its present health service, or wealthy USA be shamed in the general eye by a system of medical exploitation that makes doctors rob and ruins their patients, if October had not built its far-reaching system of both remedial and preventive medicine throughout Asian as well as European USSR many years ago? While Australian aboriginals, Amerindians in the USA and the imperialist exploited lands of South America, the tortured and humiliated Africans of Southern Africa are degraded and even exterminated, Soviet Chukchis have become parachutists and Mongolian women surgeons and astronomers.

The imperfections that so far remain in socialist society are, *for the most part*, shortfalls from the high standards to which its own people strive. What the imperialists hate them for is not these but the improvements which constitute their pacemaking, which inspire the peoples of all countries in their demands, and which the imperialists can never match.

It is right and proper that young people should not be bored by reminders of the benefits they have inherited from the past but concentrate upon the errors that remain still to be corrected, the wrongs to be righted, for this is a motive force of progress. Yet we greybeards and baldheads have no right to ignore what has changed while we have been growing old—how far socialism has already come is the index of how far our successors are sure to go. It is the proof of the victory of October.

'Britain stands to lose nearly £300m. a year by withdrawing her forces from south-east Asia and the Persian Gulf, according to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs.

'In a Conservative booklet published today he says that the Government spokesman agreed that Britain draws a net profit of about £300m. a year from the areas.' (From *The Times*, August 25, 1969)

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SALUTE TO THE OCTOBER REVOLU

The caption on this poster reads:

Spectre of the Paris Commune

Rise from the dead under the flag of the Soviets

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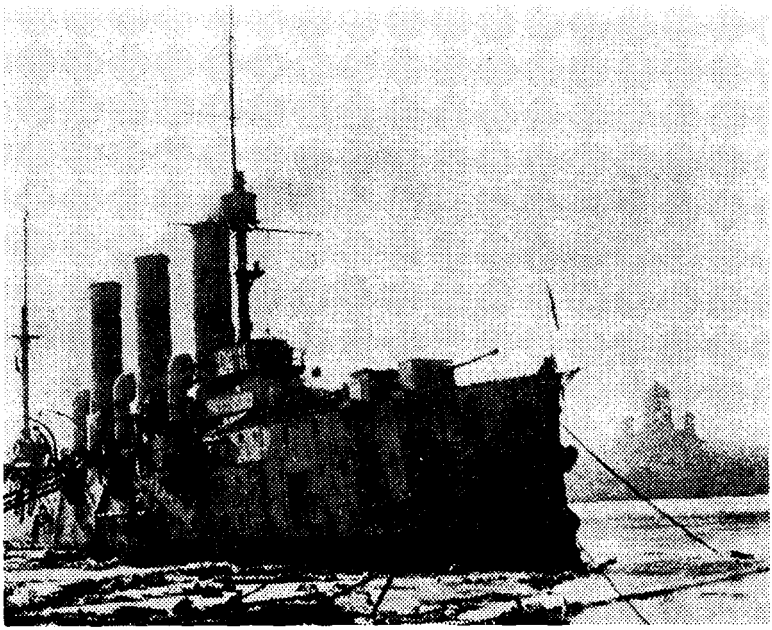

he cruiser
Aurora
the river
Neva

(Illustrations by courtesy of Novosti Press Agency—APN)

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HOUSING FAILURE

Tom Vernon*

> **'Despite 20 years of intensive effort, housing in many towns is still inadequate, both in quantity and quality, resulting, in the biggest urban conurbations, in overcrowding, squalor, exploitation and, for the most unfortunate of all, in actual homelessness.'**
> (Paragraph 43, Redcliffe-Maud Report, 1969)

IN this terse and unqualified statement in the recent Royal Commission Report on Local Government in England, I find the text for this article. Housing scarcity and overcrowding, literal homelessness (i.e. no shelter at all, however wretched) and sub-standard conditions are all demonstrated in abundant statistics and Ministry of Housing and other surveys. The references to 'squalor' and 'exploitation' establish that these two hideous features of the country's housing condition are indeed on a sufficiently large scale as to require acknowledgement in any general definition of the national position: that is, that they are far from being exceptional characteristics merely to be found here and there.

There has been a focusing of public attention on the miserable lot of millions of families through two things. First, the action of many brave, and desperate, families in taking possession of empty houses and flats—squatting. As remarked in *The Times* leader on September 22 when it contrasted the 'young idealists' who occupied 144 Piccadilly but without a single family benefiting:

> The genuinely homeless squatters have at least provided their families with better temporary housing than they would otherwise have, and have been a useful prod to the authorities.

For the Minister hastened to advise all local councils to put into family occupation all empty properties they owned, even if these are due for eventual demolition. Owners of private properties cannot be written to like that and the threat of requisitioning is not available to councils. Of course, we want a much bigger reaction than that from Mr. Greenwood: a reversal of the down-turn in both council and private housebuilding. On that, more later.

The second stimulus to public interest and concern has come from the *Report* published in September by Shelter, *Face the Facts*. The *Report* uses two weapons: the statistical facts about families who literally have no accommodation at all and those many more

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living in slums, near slums or in grossly overcrowded conditions; alongside these it gives descriptive details of actual families' conditions (with a number of really horrifying pictures) which by themselves make a powerful indictment of our society.

These two things, apart from much else, show that an explosive situation has developed amongst the homeless and badly housed for all that has been done since 1945 onwards to build houses.

The present Government, with even greater justification than its predecessor, takes pride in the numbers of new dwellings built each year, unprecedented in any former period of our history. Yet the achievement, as it is called, does not match up to needs, and the output from councils and private builders is actually *falling*, with new needs (through formation of new family units) being added without cessation.

In 1965, the Labour Government published its *Housing Programme 1965 to 1970* with a 'first objective' of reaching half-a-million houses a year by 1969-70 and remarking that this target is 'modest in the light of the housing needs' and that 'the 1970s should see still bigger programmes.' Two years later the Minister confessed that a new survey of housing conditions (not published) rendered the definition of needs in the 1965 White Paper an *understatement*. In its 1966 Election Manifesto the Labour Party repeated all this about first and later targets and to attain them being 'our first priority . . . it can be done, as other nations have shown. It must be done.' But it won't be. This is the failure.

Output of houses in 1968 was 425,835 (53 per cent of this by private builders) and this is the highest ever. But it is now commonly accepted that the 1969 output will be significantly less. Completions in the first seven months were down to 206,261 as against 234,532 in that period in 1968. A recovery to the 1968 record figure in 1970 (even beyond that possibly) is not anticipated. The target of half-a-million houses (50 : 50 as between councils and private builders) will not be attained in 1970. The failure to reach the target set in 1965 for 1969-70 and, accordingly, new targets of bigger size in the 1970s means continuing misery for as many thousand families as the short-fall in achievement who, but for this, would be in new homes. The failure is not due, one must believe, to any less fervour in the Government and Party circles to end homelessness, overcrowding, squalor and all the other ills: the ideals remain, even if less vivid. . . . Nor are the private builders any less keen to build and so maximise their profits. Nor is there any scarcity in building-material supplies—on the contrary, there is stock-piling and actual

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declared redundancy in the largest brickmaker's plant, as an example. What has gone wrong, then? The answer is one word: deflation.

The Minister of Housing found himself obliged to announce a 'cut' in numbers of houses local councils would be allowed to build. That was a potent contribution to the Government's economic policy of deflation. Demand on loan finance would be reduced. Fewer building workers would be employed and getting normal wage packets; the same would happen to workers in the brick, tiles, cement, iron goods manufactories. Less consumer demand would spread through the whole economy. Aside from Ministry restraint, many councils (Tory-controlled) have been cutting down. All councils have been worried over higher rents, through higher costs, and through higher interest rates which affect not only the houses for which new loans are raised but the whole stock of houses on account of rising 'pool' interest as each new loan raises a council's average annual interest liability as a whole.

A number of factors have upset the private housebuilders. Deflationary influences apart, there is difficulty in finding land and at a price builders see fit to pay, and building costs keep rising. Some have tried to maintain selling prices (and so avoid pricing themselves out of the market) by 'simplifying', i.e. cutting out everything possible and reducing sizes; but this makes their houses less attractive to buyers and thereby less easy to sell. Deflation has cut off the bank overdrafts, whereby many builders financed their operations, and brought their schemes to a halt. A major trouble has been the falling-off of buyers and this, in part, has been due to prices beyond the means of potential owners. Average prices, with an index of 100 in 1958, rose to 186 in the ten years to 1968, an increase beyond any rise in wages or salary levels for the majority in that period.

There has been a prolonged scarcity of mortgage money and, anyhow, an interest rate of $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent has frightened off wise home seekers who will await 'better times'. Mortgage funds have been scarce due to a severe shrinkage in new deposits combined with heavy withdrawals amongst the building societies, people being attracted to the local councils and others offering better interest through the market rate influenced by the high bank rate (all part of deflation). The local council permitted level of mortgage advances to housebuyers was very severely cut by the Government (as a deflationary measure). Hence would-be buyers very frequently lost their last source for a new house and, at the same time, could not sell an existing home because no potential buyer could get a council

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loan, these being especially intended for older houses which building societies will not look at.

In every direction one finds deflation as the root cause of the fall in housebuilding. The Labour Government's 'first objective' and 'first priority' was not insulated against the effects of its financial policies.

We might hope that members of the present Government, Labour MPs and Labour Party members in general will learn from the buffeting their 1965 housing aims have had from the effects of economic and financial policy that social ideals are not to be realised all that easily, if at all, within the context of our capitalist society and its chronic instability plus the special British feature connected with the international role of sterling. We might hope, too, that it will be realised by them that housing has not really been 'the first priority' as proclaimed. Instead, the aim of continuing to cut a figure in the wider world by military 'presence' and large investments has been more compelling and has been responsible for the crises which provoked deflation—and the non-fulfilment of the housing aims.

Without a total socialist transformation, could not a better performance on housing be contrived? If Italy could in 1966 devote 6.2 per cent and France 6.3 per cent of gross national product (with Britain well down at 3.5 per cent) to housebuilding, why not match this? We must re-order the priorities. If that is not done, then housing cannot be a 'first priority'. To assert this we now know must be humbug.

LABOUR MONTHLY FORTY YEARS AGO

The Five-Year Plan is significant for a double reason. In the first place, the next five years in Russia will be the intense and crucial ones for the industrialisation of Russia—her transformation from a backward agrarian country into a mature industrial country of Western efficiency and technique. Into these five years will be crowded the essence of the industrial revolution which transformed England and France and Germany in the nineteenth century—more than this, because in Russia today more modern revolutionary elements, such as electricity and the tractor, are added as well. Secondly, because it is in the fact of centralised economic planning of the economic system that a socialist system has its most significant contrast and its most important technical advantage over a capitalist system: however the latter may seek to organise itself, to master its own anarchy by monopolistic combination or by elements of State capitalism, its very character presupposes the predominance in all major economic movements of an anarchic *laissez-faire*.

(From 'The Five-Year Plan in Soviet Economy',
by Maurice Dobb, *Labour Monthly*, November 1929.)

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GERMANY AND PEACE

Gordon Schaffer

SHORTLY after the general election in the German Federal Republic and the announcement of the coalition of the Social Democratic Party and the Free Democratic Party under Willi Brandt, I took part with other international delegates in a detailed discussion on the problem of European security at the Congress of the Hungarian peace movement. The question all of us tried to answer was whether this change of government offered any grounds for hope of progress towards a genuine system of European security. No one had any illusions about the obstacles that will have to be overcome. All recognised that while the Federal Republic clings to the nonsensical claim to be the sole representative of Germany, and refuses to recognise the existence of the German Democratic Republic, while it attempts to incorporate West Berlin, and while it refuses to accept the Oder-Neisse line and the other post-war frontiers, the present deadlock will continue. No one believed that the election had seriously diminished the power of the industrial military complex which dominates the Federal Republic and which, in turn, is dominated by the same forces and, in many cases, the same individuals that created and sustained the Nazi regime. On the other hand, there is evidence that at least some sections of the SDP and some leaders of the FDP realise that West German policy has reached a dead end and are seeking a way out.

A discussion document drawn up by the Hungarian Peace Committee stressed the importance to the international situation of the recognition of the GDR by an increasing number of countries of the 'third world' and the increasing trade between the GDR and Western states. Coupled with the resumption of diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia and Romania 'this practically means the end of the Hallstein doctrine', said the document. It referred to the offer of Bonn to conclude a non-aggression agreement with the Soviet Union and her allies and to the statement by the Polish Government that it was ready to enter into talks with the Federal Republic on the acknowledgement of the Oder-Neisse frontier and added this comment:

> West German political life is not only represented by members of the Government. Members of the Social Democratic Party announce opinions that do not coincide with official policy. Recently two regional organisations of the SDP demanded recognition of the GDR. Gustav Heinemann, President

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of the Republic, warned against the renewal of fascist tendencies. Leaders of the Free Democratic Party visited Moscow on a Soviet invitation and their programme includes some realistic elements, including approaches to the GDR and signing of the non-proliferation treaty. The visit of a Social Democratic group of the Bonn parliament to Moscow on the invitation of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union can be regarded as a significant event. Equally important were the talks of Social Democrats from West Germany with Mr. Gomulka and other Polish leaders.

Is this all wishful thinking? We in Britain have good cause to know that political leaders, whatever party they belong to, are always ready to talk peace on the eve of elections. A great deal depends on the pressure exerted on the new Government and on the ability of the British people to insist that their Government demands concrete actions, and not merely words, from the Brandt administration. The danger is that we shall now see a concerted attempt by British Government spokesmen, press and television, to sweep under the carpet the deadly evidence of the revival of Nazism in Western Germany. We shall be told that the new Government will firmly control the officers in charge of the Wehrmacht who openly applaud the Hitler regime, that there is no danger from the domination of the diplomatic service, industry, education and almost every other section of West German life by the former Nazis. We shall be assured that we can now join a 'socialist' Federal Republic in the Common Market.

A useful counter to this whitewashing operation comes in D. N. Pritt's recent book.* Mr. Pritt draws up the indictment that powerful forces in the Federal Republic are preparing for war and backs it with irrefutable evidence. He shows that the failure to carry out the Potsdam agreement on denazification meant that from the beginning the economic, political and military forces that created the third Reich returned to power. They were supported as a 'bulwark against Communism' by the Western powers, in just the same way as they supported Hitler. The Federal Republic having emerged as the second most powerful capitalist state, these same elements are building up their armed strength in the hope of regaining the territories lost in Hitler's war. Above all, they do not disguise their aim to eliminate the GDR. And they become the more violent, as the GDR becomes more successful. A third of Germany living at a lower level might be tolerated, but a German socialist state, which is steadily outstripping the Federal Republic in the living standards of the mass of the people—in matters of rent, transport, education,

* *Unrepentant Aggressors—an Examination of West German Policies*, D. N. Pritt. *Lawrence & Wishart*, 236 pp., 7s. 6d.

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health and in the growth rate of production in industry and agriculture; that is to them the biggest menace of all.

Mr. Pritt examines the record of the Social Democratic leaders since the 1959 conference of the SDP removed all traces of socialism from their programme. He quotes evidence to show that in 1964 they gave up their opposition to the claim of the Federal Republic for nuclear weapons, that they made no attempt to counter the growth of Nazi propaganda in the army and in the schools. 'It is clear,' he says, 'that they support the demand for a return to the 1937 frontiers.' Perhaps most significant of all, they supported the passing of the emergency law, which gives authority to set up a dictatorship as absolute as Hitler's and can have no other meaning except as a preparation for war.

The overwhelming danger which Pritt's book underlines was expressed with fantastic clarity by Chapman Pincher in the *Daily Express* (September 11, 1969). He wrote that Whitehall was 'shuddering' because of reports that the USA and the Soviet Union might have talks on reducing nuclear weapons. Then he added:

> As long as American missiles exist in reasonable strength, they could be used to drag the Americans into a nuclear war whether they liked it or not.

That is exactly the argument of those in West Germany who dream of a war of revenge. They believe that the Nato alliance is so integrated with them that they can drag us into war, whether we like it or not.

While these dangers must be recognised, we must not ignore the more hopeful factors. I was in West Germany during the election period. I talked to some of the fine young men and girls working for Aktion Demokratischer Fortschritt, the progressive alliance, including the Communist Party, now reformed on a legal basis. Theirs was the only real programme for peace and social progress. They knew they would win no seats in the Bundestag, but they were confident their ideas were winning support among the rank and file of the trade unions and of the SDP.

The ADF manifesto spoke of the ever-rising cost of living in the Federal Republic, of the 20 milliard D.Marks spent every year on armaments, while schools, universities and social services were starved of funds. It warned that none of the main parties had a programme to tackle the key problems—disarmament, recognition of the GDR and the post-war frontiers, disbandment of the military blocks and their replacement with a genuine system of European security, together with a policy of friendship and understanding

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with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. It was the ADF supported very largely by the young people who carried the opposition to Von Thadden and his neo-Nazis into the streets and brought reality into a campaign in which the main parties could only argue about the revaluation of the D.M. They alerted many of the older generation, who failed to protest when Hitler mouthed similar slogans to those of the National Democratic Party, to the danger from the men who would lead them along the same path again. They proved that many young Germans are not ready to be cannon fodder like their fathers and grandfathers. Their campaign also exposed another danger, which was stressed to me again and again, that the Christian Democratic Union and its Bavarian partner the Christian Socialist Union, were determined 'not to be overtaken on the right' by the NDP. British people saw what that means when Franz Josef Strauss appeared on their television screens demanding nuclear weapons, refusing to accept the frontiers and calling blatently for 'self-determination' in Eastern Europe, by which he clearly meant restoration of capitalism.

Millions of Germans in both republics understand this danger. They are supremely grateful for the existence of the German Democratic Republic.

If the British Government were not only to support the call for a conference of all European states to seek ways of ensuring European security but were also to formulate a clear-cut policy for recognition of the GDR and the post-war frontiers, elimination of nuclear weapons on German soil and specific steps for disarmament and disengagement, tension would be eased. The new Bonn Government would be under immense pressure from within and without to make similar proposals.

The sad reality is that the generals are much more likely to decide policy as they did in the Weimar Republic when the government had a secret telephone line to the General Staff which was supposed to be dissolved. And any moves by Bonn are more likely to be aimed at isolating the GDR than in bringing peace to our divided continent.

But we in Britain are moving into an election year and a mass campaign demanding action on this vital issue of peace and war could not be denied.

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H. P. R. RATHBONE (January 1895-October 1969)

We mourn the death on October 9 of our very valued colleague, contributor and one time acting-editor of this magazine. Born of a highly political family well known on Merseyside, Hugo Rathbone plunged into socialist politics while a student at Christchurch in Oxford. In 1917 he came to the Labour Research Department to which he devoted his energies for many years and was for a short period its secretary. His activities widened after he had joined the Communist Party on its formation in 1920 and included participation in work of the Minority Movement, the Colonial Committee of the Communist Party, the League against Imperialism and other such bodies, while taking the most active part in the membership activities of his branch. The fruit of his research work began to appear in this magazine in 1922 in a remarkable series of articles in which he showed a penetrating insight into the workings of finance capital particularly of the 'mystery' of capital exports and their economic and political significance. His studies brought him to Moscow where his book on India was published in Russian with the preface by the economist Eugen Varga. For a number of years in the 1930s he was acting editor of this magazine and when, after a period of withdrawal, he returned in the later 1950s he functioned fully, until recent months, as a member of the editorial board.

Hugo Rathbone possessed an extraordinary depth of feeling combined with a penetrating insight. His physical disabilities caused by early poliomyelitis were complicated in later years by a steadily crippling arthritic condition in the last twenty years. Though very frequently in severe pain and discomfort he always reacted with the utmost pluck and endurance to these strokes of fortune. He was beyond most of his colleagues deeply interested in the arts and in music; and the fineness of his perception, so marked in matters economic and political questions, was also revealed in a high degree in his culture. On Africa, South America, Asia, his work won him ungrudging respect and friendship of many of the leaders and fighters amongst the oppressed peoples.

A few of Hugo Rathbone's contributions to *Labour Monthly* include: *Anglo-American Rivalry in the Argentine* (1922), *The World Economic Situation* (1923), *The Dominion of Canada* (1923), *The Sudan Scandal* (1924), *The Cotton Workers' Fight Against Imperialism* (1928), *The Place of the Peasantry in the Indian Revolution* (1930), *The Intelligentsia and War* (1930), *Australia Under Orders* (1930), *The Parasitic Decay of British Imperialism* (1931), *Ten Years of Economic Crisis* (1931), *British Imperialism at Bay* (1931), *Ottawa and the Drive to War* (1932), *The World Economic Conference* (1933), *Roosevelt Takes up the Gauntlet* (1933), *The Problems of African Independence* (1936), *Slithering to Ruin* (1958), *Nyasaland Massacre* (1959), *United Nations in the Congo* (1960), *Britain's 'Invisibles'* (1968), *More on Britain's 'Invisibles'* (1968).

R.P.A.

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INDIA IN MOVEMENT

Dilip Bose

AFTER twenty years of enjoying unchallenged power in the country, the house that was the National Congress, once nurtured and built by the martyrdom and sacrifice of millions of Indian patriots, started to fall. Power had corrupted and corroded the body politic of the Congress. From the previous pre-independence position of a united national front organisation, which included all trends from extreme right to the Communists, it had degenerated into a political party led and controlled exclusively by the big monopolist bourgeoisie. It could cash in on its contribution to the freedom struggle (though its claim to have brought freedom to India by its method of non-violent struggle is not borne out by facts), as also on the personal popularity and image of a left and socialist Nehru, and still enjoy unrivalled monopoly of power both at the centre and in the States.

In the 1967 general elections, for the first time in six States, viz. West Bengal, Bihar, UP, Punjab, Madras now called Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, it lost to a combination of left opposition parties, with the two Communist Parties, the official Communist Party of India (CPI) and the CPI (Marxist) leading in West Bengal and Kerala. All kinds of intrigues and the most miscellaneous types of tactics were utilised to bring down the United Front Government in West Bengal and in the other States of Bihar, UP, and Punjab with Communist participation. Presidential rule was imposed on the people of these States. It was evident that the Congress Party was willing to follow the parliamentary system only so long as it helped it to retain power. But it is a measure of the advance of the democratic forces in India that this could not be done with impunity.

We saw the first demonstration of this in Kerala in 1957, during Nehru's lifetime, when a duly elected government with Communist and non-party participation was scrapped at the direct behest of our present Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, who was then the President of the National Congress. The Communists and their allies came back to the government in Kerala in 1965 with an increased majority. The same method was tried in West Bengal in November 1967 (see *LM*, February 1968, for the writer's article on the subject). But the Communists with other left and democratic parties came back with a thumping majority in 1969. Even in Bihar all anti-democratic manoeuvres have so far failed to prop up a secure Congress regime.

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This reality brought about a difference in understanding between two sections of Congress leaders. While the right-wingers, constituting what is commonly referred to in our political parlance as the Syndicate (consisting of the Congress President Njilangappa, the then Finance and deputy Prime Minister Morarji Desai, the discredited Congress boss of West Bengal Atulya Ghosh, and ex-president Kamaraj and deposed Minister S. K. Patil, only recently back in parliament through a bye-election) sought a not so concealed alliance with the Hindu communalist party, Jana Sangha, and the extreme right Swatantra, the other section led by Indira Gandhi drew different lessons. It has, therefore, considerably hastened the schism inside the Congress though much of the schism had arisen from factional quarrels, contests and other factors. But these by themselves might not have led to present-day developments, had not sections of the Congress seen that extreme anti-democratic methods have failed to achieve most of their objectives.

The general economic depression under Congress rule, and particularly following the policy of devaluation of the Indian currency, was also slowly maturing to a political crisis. But this is as yet only a beginning and is likely to mature further as the democratic forces sweep forward in a mighty united front of all left and democratic parties and with the increasing alliance of the working class and the peasantry as its core. With the house of the Congress in disarray and collapse in certain cases, as in West Bengal, a hiatus has developed in the Indian political scene and the hard reality which must be understood is that no single political party, including the two Communist Parties even unitedly can fill that hiatus. Only a united front of all democratic-minded left parties would be in a position to do so, and the more united they are the greater consequently will be the political crisis.

At the last Bangalore session of the All-India Congress Committee, Congress was to declare its nominations for the President of India, which had fallen vacant after the death of Zakir Hussain. The Syndicate foisted upon it the candidature of Sanjiva Reddy, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha (the lower House of the Indian parliament), without prior consultation and agreement with the majority of the members. Congress President Njilangappa sent out open feelers to the communalist Jana Sangha and the extreme right-wing Swatantra for an ultimate right coalition government at the centre. No doubt this would have paved the way for the dismissal of the Communist-led United Front Governments in West Bengal and Kerala and further advance of right reaction all over the country.

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At some stage of this right advance Mrs. Gandhi would also have had to go.

The Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, with full support of all the left-wing forces, including the two Communist Parties and the left-wing Congressmen, including two Cabinet Ministers, Fakruddin Ali Ahmed and Jagjivan Ram fought back. Fourteen commercial banks in the country were nationalised and Finance Minister, Morarji Desai, also holding the post of deputy Prime Ministership, tipped to become the future Prime Minister in the event of a right take-over, was relieved of his finance portfolio, though not of the deputy Prime Ministership.

Then came the declaration with the open support of the Prime Minister that Congressmen all over the country would be free to vote according to their conscience*. It was evident that differences which were, at the beginning, of a somewhat factional nature were congealing into hardened political positions. The possibilities of the Congress dividing vertically from top to bottom were opening up. A patch-work had been arrived at when the Syndicate faltered and did not bring in a no-confidence, or at least a vote of censure or even disapproval against the Prime Minister. But this compromise is perhaps not likely to last, and one of the principal levers for bringing about this rift between the Syndicate and the right-wing forces versus the Congressmen and the left progressives will surely be the emergence of the practical outlines of an alternative political combination of United Front and of left democratic parties and its further broadening as illustrated by West Bengal. Be it noted that in West Bengal the Syndicate candidate received only 25 votes and 248 went for Giri, whereas even the total strength of the Congress members of the West Bengal State Legislature is 55, i.e. more than half the members voted according to their 'conscience' against the Syndicate candidate, held out as the official Congress candidate for presidentship of India.

The steps taken by Indira Gandhi and left-swinging Congressmen, though welcome, are far from enough. Neither can we rest assured that there will be no backsliding. To cut off all retreat, pressure must be built up throughout the country so that the steps are pursued to their logical culmination. For this, mobilisation of the people on every issue of the people's livelihood and democracy is the imperative need.

The nationalisation of fourteen Indian banks is the first positive

* The election of the Indian President takes place on the basis of an electoral college, consisting of all the members of the two houses of parliament and the state legislatures.

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step in this direction. It can work as a lever to loosen the hold of the monopolists over the country's economy. But the initial reaction of Indian big business (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) has not been one of alarm. They expect to operate within the nationalised banks' management as well as within the government (both Ministerial and bureaucratic) where it is strongly entrenched. What is essential is the setting up of very precise and clear guidelines for the nationalised banks' management —both in regard to the mobilisation of deposits as well as advances. These guidelines should be openly of an anti-monopoly character and a body needs to be set up to watch the implementation of these directives in the nationalised banking system as a whole.

Moreover, the private banks, guided by profit motives, have been very reluctant to give advances to peasants and artisans who can offer little security. Yet a liberal credit policy in this direction by the nationalised banks would bring in rich dividends in terms of national welfare. No doubt due safeguards have to be there which it will be the job of the new body with more than advisory capacity to watch. The new body must have direct representation from the trade unions, the organisations of small and medium business and agricultural experts.

The National Council of the Communist Party of India which has just concluded its session (September 2) has described as an 'uneasy truce' the situation existing between the Syndicate and the left-orientated Congressmen round Mrs. Indira Gandhi. There is no doubt that the rightist forces will try to regroup themselves and strike again. To defeat this the National Council of the CPI has adopted a 15-point programme for mobilisation of the people, the main points of which are democratisation of the national economy, with cleaning up of administration and association of trade unions in the public sector, nationalisation of import and export trade, curbing of foreign monopolies and greater emphasis on national self-reliance, as also further reorientation of foreign policy. Comrade N. K. Krishnan, while briefing the press, also stressed the need for joint action with the CPI (Marxist). The CPI has reiterated the offer of forming a joint block in parliament with the other Communist Party, and has also stressed the need for joint action not only with other left parties but also with democratic forces within the Congress in support of the 15-point demands.

A new possibility for further advance along democratic and socialist lines has opened up with the election of V. V. Giri as the President of India, and the defeat of the right-wing forces represented by the

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CORRESPONDENCE:

A Peace Policy for Israel

IVOR MONTAGU IS CORRECT in calling for the 'de-Zionisation' of Israel (*LM*, September 1969) but it is the 'Palestine liberation front's' refusal to recognise the fact that 'an Israeli nation' has taken root in Palestine which strengthens the grip of Zionism over the Israelis (and the majority of world Jewry). It is not Jews, identifiable as such because of their religious beliefs, that live in Palestine (as claimed by the 'Palestine liberation front') but the *Israeli nation.* It is their right to self-determination which has been realised; it is the Palestine Arabs' rights which have still to be realised. These rights cannot be realised through the destruction of the rights of the Israelis to nationhood, which the programme of the 'Palestine liberation front' envisages. Noble or ignoble the 'aspiration proclaimed by the Palestine liberation movement: a secular Palestine in which all—Arab, Jew, Christian, Moslem—all, including all Jews now in Israel [why not Israelis? because this 'concept' is to fade away] and all former Palestinians and immediate descendants who wish to return—shall dwell with equal rights in a fully democratic society' in no way meets the needs of the problem.

I am deliberately belabouring this point for it has become the policy of the left to support this view, almost uncritically, and in doing so allow the Zionists to parade as the defenders of Israel *and* of world Jewry. It is the Zionists who would identify all Jews with Israel and Israel's problems with those of world Jewry. The 'Palestine liberation front' intensifies this feeling of identification, thus making their struggle for self-determination all the more difficult.

Long-term solutions — Montagu's Swiss confederation, or the Czech-Slovak approach—will be worked out in conformity with the needs of the people when they become 'the order of the day'. Now, the immediate task is to realise what is 'on the order of the day'—*now*, the establishment of peace between Israel and the Arab states, the realisation of the rights of the Palestine Arab people as provided for in the many UN resolutions dealing with the issues—all of which are firmly based on the *fact* that the State of Israel exists, and has a right to exist.

No greater step forward can be taken in this direction, than through the realisation and acceptance by the 'Palestine liberation movement' of this fact. Nothing would contribute more greatly to the freeing of the Near East from the influence of imperialism and neo-colonialism and its Zionist ally than this internationalist approach to the 'Arab-Israeli' problem.

V. S. GOLDBERG
Ilford

Ivor Montagu replies:

MR. GOLDBERG misses the point. The question is not whether or no the state of Israel has a 'right' to exist, or whether or no its existence is for the moment a 'fact', but on what basis Israel in Palestine can secure a future.

Implementation of the UN resolution is the first necessity to gain a breathing space, no less for Israel than for the rest of the Middle East, in which to find a peaceful settlement, but in the end the final answer will be the choice of the Israeli people.

A Zionist state based on racial and religious hegemony, displacing the Palestine Arabs or reducing them to a barely tolerated inferior status, can no more be viable in the long run than apartheid South Africa, or Rhodesia or the Portuguese colonies. Arms superiority, imperialist patronage, may

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protect for a time, but they are impermanent factors, they will not last for ever. The conscience of mankind will not tolerate basic injustice indefinitely. Indignation at a Zionist Israel, on the other hand, will last and grow, outside and inside Palestine, until shame sweeps it away.

Nothing can secure an Israeli presence in permanence in Palestine but *partnership* with the Palestinians and recognition that they have as much right in the *whole* country as, and more than, the newcomers. The generous ideals of equality and non-discrimination proclaimed by the Palestine liberation organisation open the door to this possibility and the sooner the people of Israel shake themselves free from Zionist illusions and realise this, the better their chance.

BOOKS

Reform of the Economic Mechanism in Hungary
Edited by István Friss
Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest (Central Books), 274 pp., £2 10s.

RELATIVELY LITTLE IS KNOWN in this country about the recent economic reform in Hungary, attention and information having been mainly directed towards the changes in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. This well produced book written by various hands and edited by Professor Friss, head of the Academy Institute of Economics in Budapest, is accordingly especially welcome.

The Hungarian reform, introduced last year and still in process of implementation, resembles that in Czechoslovakia rather than the Soviet Union. In a number of respects the Hungarian changes go further than the Soviet, in particular as regards the substitution of trade in production goods between socialist enterprises in place of the system of centralised allocation (the subject of Chapter V), and as regards partial decentralisation of price-fixing (the subject of Chapter VI by Prof. B. Csikós-Nagy, the main engineer of the recent price reform). At one time (in the mid-1950s) the allocation system covered as many as 2,400 kinds of products. By 1966 these had been reduced to 400 centrally allocated goods, amounting to 'more than half of the value of material goods turned out in the country or imported.' This system had numerous defects, which are listed, with 'the general finding that central allocation is not able to avoid shortages.' Accordingly it is to be replaced (with some reservations and limits) 'by a trade mechanism, relying on direct and generally free, market relations between the enterprises.'

The price reform, designed to give what is called a 'flexible price mechanism', reflecting market influences, in principle adopts prices of production (in Marx's sense) as a basis and ends the old situation 'where the users of capital and land did not pay for their use' and investment funds were provided to industries through 'non-repayable allocations from the state budget.' For the future there are to be categories of goods where prices can be contractually varied between upper and lower limits, with even some entirely 'free prices'.

Prof. Friss in the course of his first chapter summarising the general features of the reform says: 'We consider as one of the main features of our new system the extension and strengthening of our socialist democracy.' This democratisation is princi-

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pally to take the form of 'the increased role of the trade union and of its local organisation' in connection with the new degree of enterprise autonomy. In connection with the appointment of directors of enterprises, it is added that 'trade unions have not the formal right of vetoing a nomination, but under our conditions it is hardly possible for the supervisory organ to neglect an emphatic opinion of the trade union' (consultation of which is obligatory in connection with an appointment).

There are chapters also on financial implications of the changes, on use of mathematical methods in planning, and on international relations through CMEA (or Comecon). There is a useful glossary of terms, and the English of the translation is generally clear and adequate (with no more than a few lapses, one of which, is the frequent use of the rather curious word 'expectable'). All those interested in economic developments in the socialist countries would do well to consult this informative small volume.

MAURICE DOBB

Guerrilla Warfare
Che Guevara
Penguin, 144 pp., 4s.

ALTHOUGH HIGHLY PRAISED in many quarters (not all on the left), this is a book that time and a close reading tend to diminish. It is, for one thing, a blueprint of the strategy and tactics that led to the abortive, disastrous guerrilla effort in Bolivia, resulting in Che Guevara's own death.

Written shortly after the victory of the Cuban revolution, its spare prose, as in all that Guevara wrote, still reveals the determination and the heroic personalities of the author and his comrades.

The guerrilla warfare that the book delineates is based almost wholly on the Cuban experience, which, it is generally recognised, had certain unique aspects. Guevara, however, intended it to have a universal validity, and it is this underlying approach of his, contrary to the indigenous nature and conditions of national liberation movements, that makes a critical reading of it essential.

Since it leaves out, deliberately, the leading role of the vanguard political party and puts total emphasis on the military operation, it obviously can have but limited usefulness to the great majority of guerrilla struggles that are conducted by political movements based on mass organisation and arising out of mass experience.

The usefulness it does have to such movements lies in its suggestions regarding weapons and equipment, employment of terrain and practical details of a guerrilla's daily life. (Even the latter details, however, often lack universality. For example, Guevara recommends as essential for every guerrilla possession of a jungle hammock, no doubt because he used one. In the Filipino Huk movement I never saw a single jungle hammock, and I doubt if it is to be found in any other guerrilla army's accoutrement. In fact, I wouldn't care to be caught in one in a surprise attack. Also, Guevara insists that guerrillas must have shoes of 'the best possible construction.' On the contrary, rubber-soled canvas tennis shoes are best in wet, rivered, mountain jungle, and are more easily acquired.)

For an understanding of the organisation and tactics of the Castro-led July 26th Movement, this is an indispensable book. It will have to be compared and dove-tailed with the experiences and methods of many other movements, however, before any generalisations on guerrilla warfare can be reasonably made.

WILLIAM J. POMEROY

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Abuse of Power: U.S. Foreign Policy from Cuba to Vietnam
Theodore Draper
Penguin Books, 238 pp., 6s.

THIS BOOK ORIGINALLY APPEARED in the United States in 1967, in cloth in London a year later; there have been no revisions for this 1969 printing. With developments as swift and significant as they have been in the intervening two years, the volume suffers from a dated quality.

In the years just before and since Mr. Draper's book appeared, somewhat similarly entitled works have been published: *The Obligations of Power*, (1966), by Harlan Cleveland—a former Assistant Secretary of State and later US Permanent Representative to Nato; Senator J. W. Fulbright's *The Arrogance of Power* (1967); Senator Eugene McCarthy's *The Limits of Power* (1967); *The Illusion of Power* (1968), by a non-office holding Mr. J. E. McCarthy; and *Imperatives of Peace and Responsibilities of Power* (1968), published by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the US.

Of all these 'power' books, only that by Mr. Cleveland was satisfied with the uses to which it was being put by the United States. The others, and not least Mr. Draper's, reflect the widening disenchantment with US foreign policy which, at this writing, certainly includes the vast majority—perhaps 85 per cent—of the American population.

Mr. Draper's volume touches briefly upon the US military interventions in Cuba and the Dominican Republic; most of it is concerned with the Vietnam atrocity. The author sees as 'the problem we are examining . . . the supersession of political by military instrumentalities in the conduct of American foreign policy' (p. 91). He thinks this 'supersession' has occurred 'because our politics have failed' and that recent US diplomacy has been marked by extraordinary deceptiveness —extraordinary even for diplomacy— since 'no politician can admit' such failure (p. 162).

The book is useful in so far as it describes, accurately though not exhaustively, the record of official United States duplicity, particularly since the Geneva Agreements of 1954. Mr. Draper demonstrates, citing chapter and verse, how Presidents from Eisenhower through to Johnson (and not excluding Mr. Nixon while he was Vice President) and all State Secretaries from Dulles to Rusk repeatedly misrepresented the truth. No allegation other than this ugly one will do, and Mr. Draper's carefully documented record shows that these misrepresentations must have been deliberate; they were in fact so gross and so numerous as to have created the most pervasive 'credibility gap' in American history.

One should add that, since Mr. Draper's volume appeared, this deliberate misrepresentation has persisted, since the policy requiring this has not altered. Only recently, for example, the Government was forced—as the result of a series of accidents, the latest of which incapacitated a score of its own soldiers—to confess to storing poison gasses abroad; to admit, after Congressman Richard McCarthy (of New York) exposed the fact, that serious plans had been developed for poisoning the entire Cuban sugar crop; and to maintain an embarrassed silence in the face of Mr. Norman Cousin's recent exposure (in *The Saturday Review*, July 26, 1969) that to his own personal and certain knowledge, Washington had given its answer to several serious bids for peace in Vietnam by intensifying its bombardment of North Vietnam!

Mr. Draper's book—as all the other 'power' books—is weakest in its analysis; also—perhaps since Mr. Draper once was associated with the left—it suffers from an intense anti-

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communism, which happily is becoming increasingly *passé* in American literate circles.

Several times Mr. Draper poses questions such as: 'Why have we permitted ourselves to become enmeshed in these multiple confusions and contradictions?' (p. 152). But he never answers these and he cannot, really, for when he poses the question in terms of personal pronouns and in terms of 'confusion' he avoids fundamentals. For this reason, the word imperialism nowhere appears in Mr. Draper's book, except to be enclosed in ironic quotation marks, reflecting his contemptuous rejection of 'Marxian mythology'. The 'mythology' is reality and the irony is that Mr. Draper once knew it; now, having abandoned it, he is reduced to mythologising power itself and giving it not only a classless quality but also an hypnotic and fatal essence and ascribing the 'confusion' to misguided worship thereof.

I cannot close this brief notice without calling attention to the depths into which anti-communism has led Mr. Draper. Thus, he writes of 'the rightful self-esteem which the Indonesians should feel for doing the job by themselves without foreign help or inspiration; it would be much healthier and sounder for all concerned if the Indonesian revolt against the communists were used as an example of what can be done without US intervention, even at secondhand' (p. 125). In the first place, the evidence of Washington's hand in the *coup* is good, but this is the least of Mr. Draper's failings. To refer to an event in which about 750,000 men, women and children were slaughtered in a few days in the manner of Draper—'healthier and sounder'—is to convey some idea of the appalling ravages suffered by professional anti-communists—even, as in Mr. Draper's case, of the liberal variety.

HERBERT APTHEKER

Obsolete Communism: The Left Wing Alternative

Gabriel and Daniel Cohn-Bendit

Penguin Books, 256 pp., 5s.

HOWEVER ABERRANT their conclusions, some critiques of the policies of the French Communist Party in May and June 1968 have demonstrated a certain measure of intelligence and sophistication. This publication does not: it is arrogant, vulgar and superficial.

The book purports to show, from an anarchist viewpoint, that a potential revolutionary situation was sabotaged only by the machinations of the Communist Party and the trade unions, and to conclude from this that political leadership of any sort is always wrong in principle. The authors never treat on its merits the case advanced by the Communist Party or try to answer it on its own ground; they merely dismiss it in every instance as motivated by bad faith.

An historical discussion of Bolshevism is conducted on similar lines. The Cohn-Bendits' presentation of Lenin's position is a malevolent caricature, and to condemn Bolshevism from its own mouth they present—Trotsky: stressing his proposals to militarise the trade unions after the civil war but not mentioning that these were decisively rejected. As supposedly genuine revolutionaries, in contrast to the Bolsheviks, they ignorantly idealise the anarchist movement led by Makhno, 'notorious for banditry and anti-semitic pogroms' (Alexander Werth, *Russia at War*, p. 708).

Indeed the book is more a specimen of political demonology rather than serious analysis, but its authors can congratulate themselves that they measure up fully to the best standards of anti-communist cold-war slander.

WILLIE THOMPSON

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No Exit from Vietnam
Robert Thompson
Chatto & Windus, 210 pp., 30s.

SIR ROBERT THOMPSON is described as 'the acknowledged expert on revolutionary war' by Field-Marshal Sir Gerald Templer, under whom he served in charge of 'security' throughout the so-called 'emergency' in Malaya. This assessment may be justified, but after reading this second book by him about the war in Vietnam one cannot agree with the Field-Marshal's belief that 'if he had been in a position of authority at the beginning of the war in Vietnam events might very well have turned out differently.' For what greater mistake in the appreciation of the situation in Vietnam can there be than that of which he seems, surprisingly, still to be proud when he wrote that he and his colleagues on the British Advisory Mission during nearly four years in South Vietnam, all of whom had spent all the twelve years of the 'emergency' in Malaya, 'all remarked that we found nothing new in Vietnam except in scale and intensity. It was to us a matter only of adapting strategy, tactics and methods to a slightly different environment'! And what greater absurdity, than his conviction that both the 'emergency' in Malaya and the war in Vietnam 'were not wars to evict imperialists, but wars to decide the colonial succession'! According to him, 'when the Geneva Agreements ending the war were signed in 1954, the French ceded sovereignty, but the question of the succession was still undecided,' which suggests, as does also his amazing mis-assertion that 'the number of American military advisers was kept at the level (685) allowed under the Geneva Agreements,' that he has either not read the Agreements, or else is deliberately misleading.

'Not one of the four American Presidents concerned,' he writes, 'would have become involved in Vietnam if they could have foreseen what the eventual commitment would be'; yet he applauds President Johnson because 'he did not underestimate the importance of the war and the consequences of failure,' which he admits to having diagnosed in June 1968, as having actually become inevitable. It would be interesting to know what development since that date has moved him to see things in a more hopeful light, and to advise the Americans to adopt as their revised aim: 'To establish, at a cost acceptable to the US South Vietnam as a free, united and independent country which is politically stable and economically expanding.' To achieve this aim, however, he stipulates that the US is left with 'a long haul low cost strategy as the only option' and by this he means the maintenance in South Vietnam of one or two American divisions for 'at least ten to fifteen years.' 'There is no exit,' he declares firmly, because the alternative would be 'a communist victory through the "armed struggle", in spite of massive American intervention, which would make a far greater impact on the peoples of S.E. Asia, and indeed of the world, than a victory through the "legal struggle".' But he admits candidly that neither the Democratic Republic of Vietnam nor the National Liberation Front is prepared to risk failure in the achievement of their aims by trustful compromise, as occurred in 1954 and that 'Hanoi might not be frightened by the prospect of a fifty years war, but Washington certainly would be.' This book confirms the impression that Britain, anxious about Malaya, is still urging the US to fight on, as she urged France to fight on long after she was beaten by the Vietnamese.

EDGAR P. YOUNG

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Poems of Revolt
An anthology chosen by Joan Beauchamp
Labour Research Department, 106 pp., 7s. 6d.

THIS WELCOME REPRINT of Joan Beauchamp's *Poems of Revolt*, originally published in 1924, is enriched with a memoir by Robin Page Arnot. This memoir provides a living picture of one who gave so much service to every form of the liberation movement in so many fields over a lifetime of active participation from 1908 to 1964, heroically carrying on despite the crippling effects of a V2 bomb in 1944 which deprived her thenceforth of the use of her limbs. Among her many services she is especially honoured by *Labour Monthly* for her close association from the earliest days, as Secretary of the Trinity Trust and as the first Business Manager of our journal. R.P.D.

The British in Northern Nigeria
Robert Heussler
Oxford University Press, 210 pp., 42s.

IN THE TWO-YEAR-OLD tragic military conflict between Federal Nigeria and Biafra the orthodox interpretation is that it is a purely internal affair between the Ibo peoples and the rest of Nigeria. They are certainly directly involved in this ghastly war, but it is doubtful whether it would ever have taken place had it not been for British political strategy in Nigeria over the past 60 years.

Those who have studied the imperialist carve-up of Africa will know that Nigeria was an artificial British creation. But the main pillar of British strategy was to encourage and strengthen the domination of the northern feudal emirs over the rest of Nigeria. Through Lord Lugard's device of 'indirect rule' they became instruments of British policy. In Lugard's own words: 'It is not the intention of the Governor to strip you of all authority, but on the contrary he wishes to rule together with you, to strengthen your authority. . . .' (December, 1907).

The author explains that 'British officers were built into the system,' and that even in 1966 several northern provinces were being run by British officers, as well as key posts in Kaduna, the seat of the former Northern House of Assembly. The first few pages of the book give a list of more than 70 British officers who occupied important positions in the north during this century, most of them in the armed forces and as district officers and governors.

The view is expressed that 'the chiefs were surprised by the notion of a North without the British.' Why they should be is a mystery, for when independence came in 1960 most of them were still there, and many remain to this day.

True, it is no longer a simple matter of northern domination (the north is now divided into six states) but of a coalition of feudal emirs, big business, and a prosperous African *élite* who willingly co-operate with the imperialists in their strategy of neo-colonialism in Federal Nigeria.

The British strategy of 'indirect rule' has certainly brought disastrous results for Nigeria as a whole, and British policy is completely involved with the ghastly war against Biafra.

IDRIS COX

I should like to explain that in my review of Kwame Nkrumah's book, *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare* (*LM*, July 1969), it was incorrect to state the book was 'silent' on the issue of an All-African Government. One may differ on how this is presented, but this proposal appears several times in the book. Humble apologies to the author. I.C.

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ENCOURAGING RESPONSE

THE response to our September appeal for five past issues of *LM* which were in short supply has been magnificent. I would like to quote from just a few of the letters we received with the back copies.

From London: 'Returned herewith two copies of *LM* to help make complete volumes. Also £1 donation in appreciation of the help that *LM* has given over the years.' And from Aylesbury: 'Please find enclosed copies of *LM* as requested. It is a pleasure to read Palme Dutt's comments—makes a change from Reuter!'

Four copies dating from 1949-51 reached us from a reader who remembers our office in Ballards Lane with its 'one very steep stairway as entrance; half way up it a narrow step with dangerous outward opening door.' Special thanks for these copies preserved over the twenty intervening years.

Other returns were from Abertillery, Bristol, Bury St. Edmunds, Cardiff, Congleton, Dublin, Lerwick and Tunbridge Wells.

One letter saved till last to draw attention to our Fund: this is from Leigh-on-Sea: 'Re your request, sorry I have only the December '66 *LM*. Generally I pass my copy on to a neighbour and I gather it "goes the rounds". I am sorry to see the Fund so low. Pity we can't keep it nearer the hundred. I send my monthly contribution via a local group of readers—pity, again, more groups don't send a bit. Well, a little practical sympathy is worth many words, so as I am writing I enclose an extra £1 for the Fund.'

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